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ABSTRACT

Recognizing that children's earliest years are critical, stakeholders in Delaware have joined together to define what types of experiences children should ideally have before they enter kindergarten. A statewide committee with policymakers, parents, and representatives from the early care and education community, schools, higher education, and family literacy programs met during 2002 to develop descriptions of the types of abilities and characteristics children should have the opportunity to develop before school entry. This resulting Foundations document was designed to provide a structure and a guide for planning instructional experiences that are essential to facilitate children's development to reach the instructional outcomes targeted. Feedback was obtained on earlier drafts of the document from focus groups held throughout the state and at a variety of meetings and conferences. The document is organized into two parts: (1) a statement of guiding principles; and (2) the Early Learning Foundations. Foundations are detailed in seven developmental domains paralleling those found in the Head Start Child Outcome Framework: language development, mathematics, science, creative arts, emotional and social development, approaches to learning, and physical health and development. The guiding principles relate to learning through play, kindergarten eligibility, individual differences, school accessibility, parents' role as child's first teachers, and the importance of quality early experiences in preparing a child for school success. Within each developmental domain are several developmental areas that further define important elements of the domain, and within each development area are outlines of the types of learning experiences children should have to promote success. A list of advisory work group members and focus group participants completes the document. (KB)

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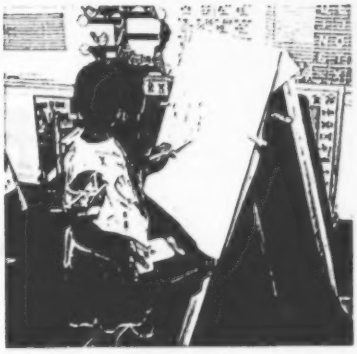
DELAWARE
Early Learning Foundations for School Success



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Delaware Early Learning Foundations for School Success

Dear Early Educator:

Having children come to school ready to be successful is an important aspect to early education services. The State of Delaware is committed to supporting early education for young children. The Delaware Department of Education has been actively involved in providing early education services to children ages infancy through kindergarten entry. The Interagency Resource Management Committee established the Office of Early Care and Education in the Department in 2002 with the intent to support the implementation of Early Success, a plan established to support the development of a quality early care and education system throughout the state. Within the plan are eight goals guiding the quality enhancement process. One of those goals is to, "employ a wide range of proven approaches for achieving quality" (Early Success, April 2000). Research has demonstrated that high quality early education does have a positive impact on children's later school achievement. To impact quality, it is important to address two critical components: 1) curriculum instruction, and 2) professional development.

The decision was made to first address the issue of curriculum instruction. To begin this process, it was necessary to first identify instructional outcomes. The question was asked: What is it that is expected developmentally of a child, after completing one year of preschool education prior to kindergarten? Considerable time and effort was made by the Advisory and focus groups towards identifying those outcomes. Broad input was received to identify developmentally appropriate skills that would support a child's success. Careful consideration was also given to linking the Foundations with Delaware's K-12 standards and kindergarten performance indicators. Using this input, the Advisory and focus groups adapted and revised the skills, reformatting them using a curricular perspective. So, rather than have a listing of "readiness skills" the Foundations document is a curricular planning guide that can be used by early educators. The focus of the Foundations is to provide a structure and guide for planning instructional experiences that are essential to facilitate children's development to reach the instructional outcomes targeted.

Much appreciation needs to go to the Advisory Work Group and the individual county-level focus group members for their contributions to this effort. A significant amount of time and effort was put towards this project by each participant. Appreciation also goes to those individuals that responded with helpful and constructive feedback during the comment period. Finally, thank you to Dr. Catherine Scott-Little for her untiring coordination of effort and editing of documents. In each case, it was evident that careful consideration went into suggestions towards the development of the Foundations document. It is the intent of this work to ensure that Delaware's children are ready to begin school with the skills they need to be successful.

Dr. Jim J. Lesko
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Exceptional Children and Early Childhood Education

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Delaware Early Learning Foundations for School Success

Introduction

Purpose of the Work

Recognizing that children's earliest years are critical, the state of Delaware has joined together to define what types of experiences children should ideally have before they enter kindergarten. A statewide committee with representatives from the early care and education community, schools, higher education, family literacy programs, policy makers, and parents, met during 2002 to develop a description of the types of abilities and characteristics children should have the opportunity to develop before they start school. The intention of this work is to help parents, early care and education providers, and others provide developmentally appropriate experiences that promote children's success in school and beyond.

Delaware Preschool Readiness Work Group

Mission Statement

The work of this committee is to create a framework for learning opportunities that provides information to parents and educators to support each child's developmental growth.

Process for Developing the Document

The Work Group initially examined a variety of materials from other programs and states, in order to develop the draft *Early Learning Foundations for School Success* document. Among the materials reviewed were materials from the National Education Goals Panel, the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, the state of Connecticut's Preschool Curricular Goals and Benchmarks and similar documents from other states, the Delaware Kindergarten Performance Indicators, the Work Sampling assessment being used in kindergarten, and results from a recent survey of kindergarten teachers in Delaware. The objective was to develop recommendations for early learning experiences to promote school readiness based on the most current thinking among researchers, leading child development experts, and educators from Delaware.

Four focus groups across the state were convened to review the recommendations from the committee. Held in Kent County/Dover, Wilmington/New Castle, Newark, and Georgetown/Sussex County, the four focus groups provided an opportunity for broad review of the statewide group's work. Each focus group included preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, special education teachers, family child care providers, early care and education administrators, higher education representatives, and parents. The focus groups provided feedback on the first draft and then met again to provide feedback on the second draft of the document.

The committee's recommendations were also made available for public comments. To solicit public comments, the draft Foundations document was mailed to groups with an interest in early childhood issues, and presented at a variety of meetings and conferences across the state. Numerous early care and education providers, as well as others interested in the well-being of young children, took the opportunity to provide input. The committee carefully considered comments from the focus groups and the public comments when developing the Foundations document.

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Plans for how the Document will be Used

The goal of the statewide workgroup is to produce a document that can be used as a guide by parents, preschool teachers, family child care providers, and others. The intent is to outline the types of learning experiences children ideally should have before they come to kindergarten. The committee anticipates that additional documents will be needed to translate this *Early Learning Foundations for School Success* into curriculum aides and resources that parents and others can easily use to guide the daily experiences they provide for preschool-aged children. This document is just the first step—coming to agreement on the types of experiences that are important for young children to experience prior to kindergarten. Further work, such as additional documents and professional development, will be needed to ensure that the purpose of the document is fulfilled.

Organization of the Document

The Foundations document is organized into two parts: 1) a statement of guiding principles and 2) the Early Learning Foundations. The committee felt that it was important to state the assumptions or principles that have guided the development of this document, as well as the principles intended to guide the use of the document. These are outlined in the "Guiding Principles" section.

The Foundations document is organized by seven developmental domains:

- Language development
- Mathematics
- Science
- Creative arts
- Emotional and social development
- Approaches to learning
- Physical health and development

These domains correspond to domains included in the Head Start Child Outcome Framework and also represent areas of development the committee felt were important for children's success. Under each domain are several developmental areas that further define important elements of the domain. Within each developmental area, the committee has outlined the types of learning experiences children should have to promote success.

Summary

The Foundations document is intended to be used as an instructional guide for early childhood educators. As individuals plan annual and short-term lesson plans for preschool-age children, the Foundations can be used to assist in the development of instructional activities. Using the Literacy developmental area as an example, an educator would plan daily and longer-term classroom experiences that would promote the development of kindergarten readiness skills that would allow a child to: "Listen with interest to a story" or "Begin(s) to write the letters of their first name."

The skills listed in the document are not intended to be used as a readiness checklist. Nor is it expected that every child entering kindergarten will be able to demonstrate each of the skills listed in the Foundation document. It is hoped that early educators will use the Foundations and the information contained within, as they plan their daily, weekly, and year long classroom activities.

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Delaware Early Learning Foundations for School Success

Guiding Principles

- All children are learners.
- Children learn through play.
- All children who turn five on or before August 31 are eligible to attend kindergarten.
- All age-eligible children may enroll in kindergarten regardless of their developmental level or prior experiences.
- Every child is unique and is accepted for his/her differences in development, culture, home environment, and learning style.
- Schools will be accessible and ready to meet the individual physical and developmental needs of all children.
- Parents/families are the child's first teachers—they play a key role in preparing children for success in school through being involved in their child's education from birth.
- Quality early learning experiences are essential to prepare a child for success in school.
- The learning opportunities provided need to be developmentally appropriate for preschool-age children.
- A developmentally appropriate learning environment fosters kindergarten readiness.
- It takes partnerships among families, early care and education providers, schools, health care providers, and other community resources to promote children's development and school success.

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Delaware Early Learning Foundations for School Success

Language Development	
Developmental Area	**Prior to entering kindergarten, parents and programs will provide learning experiences for children that allow them to:**
Language	• Communicate so that they will be understood by peers and adults
	• When speaking, show an attempt to use volume appropriate to the situation
	• Communicate using multiple word phrases to respond to questions, describe ideas, and express feelings, needs and wants
	• Use language to enter into a play situation
	• Engage in conversation by making statements or asking questions
	• Make up and/or retell stories and describe experiences
	• Respond to their names, requests for action or information
	• Demonstrate understanding of messages in conversation by listening and responding appropriately
	• Show interest in playing with language
	• Begin to develop familiarity with listening to, identifying, recognizing, and discriminating sounds in words
	• Follow two or three-step directions

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Language Development (continued)	
Developmental Area	**Prior to entering kindergarten, parents and programs will provide learning experiences for children that allow them to:**
Literacy	• Show an interest in books and/or engage in reading related activities
	• Listen with interest to a story
	• Hold a book upright, turn pages from the front of the book to the back, and scan pages
	• Recognize common sounds at the beginning of words
	• Show increasing awareness of print, familiar signs, and labels
	• Use scribbles, symbols, or drawings to express experiences through pictures, dictation, and play
	• Experiment with a variety of writing tools and materials
	• Begin to recognize, name, or identify some letters of the alphabet
	• Recognize their first name in print written with the first letter in upper-case letter, followed by lower case letters
	• Become aware that there are differences in upper and lower case letters
	• Begin to write the letters of their first name
	• Begin to answer questions related to a story that has been read or told to him/her

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Mathematics	
Developmental Area	**Prior to entering kindergarten, parents and programs will provide learning experiences for children that allow them to:**
Number and Operations	• Begin to develop an awareness of numbers and counting as a means for understanding quantity
	• Develop the ability to count in sequence and recognize numerals 0 to 10
	• Begin to make use of one-to-one correspondence when counting objects
	• Begin to use language to compare numbers of objects
	• Develop the ability to determine quantity or "how many"
	• Develop an awareness of broad concepts of time that are part of the daily routine
	• Begin to understand numbers and number concepts as they relate to everyday life
Geometry and Spatial Sense	• Begin to recognize, name, describe, and compare common shapes
	• Progress in their ability to put together and take apart puzzles
	• Begin to understand geometric concepts through block play
	• Begin to develop the concept of same and different
	• Show growth in matching and sorting according to attributes such as color, shape or size
	• Build an understanding of directionality, order, and positional terms

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Mathematics (continued)	
Developmental Area	**Prior to entering kindergarten, parents and programs will provide learning experiences for children that allow them to:**
Patterns and Measurement	• Begin to recognize, copy, and extend simple patterns with a variety of materials
	• Show the ability to put objects in a series according to one or two attributes such as shape or size
	• Begin to use non-standard and standard measures
	• Recognize and name measurable attributes such as weight, volume, and length
	• Begin to compare and sort according to those attributes
	• Begin to recognize and name common colors

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Science	
Developmental Area	**Prior to entering kindergarten, parents and programs will provide learning experiences for children that allow them to:**
Scientific Skills & Methods	• Begin to use the five senses (hearing, smelling, tasting, seeing, and touching) to gather information and explore the environment
	• Begin to use simple measuring devices and concepts to gather information, investigate materials and observe processes and relationships
	• Begin to participate in simple investigations to test observations, discuss and draw conclusions, and form generalizations
	• Begin to collect, describe and record information through a variety of means, such as discussion, drawings, maps, graphs, and charts
	• Begin to observe and discuss differences and similarities among objects
	• Develop an understanding of drawings, graphs, and charts and maps as a way of recording observations
	• Begin to explore the environment through hands-on activities using simple scientific tools such as magnifying glasses, measuring devices, and their five senses
	• Begin to make predictions, explanations and generalizations
Scientific Knowledge	• Observe, describe and discuss the natural world, materials, living and non-living things, natural processes, weather and seasonal changes.
	• Expand knowledge of and respect for their body
	• Expand knowledge of and respect for the environment
	• Develop an awareness of ideas and language related to time such as daily routines and order of events
	• Show awareness and beginning understanding of changes in materials and cause-effect relationships such as freezing/melting, color mixing, and/or cooking

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Creative Arts	
Developmental Area	**Prior to entering kindergarten, parents and programs will provide learning experiences for children that allow them to:**
Music	• Participate in a variety of music activities
	• Develop awareness of different musical instruments, tones patterns/rhythms, and tempo
	• Imitate and recall patterns, songs, rhythms, and rhymes
	• Be exposed to music from a variety of cultures
Art	• Show interest in using different art media (such as play dough, paint, etc.) and materials in a variety of ways for creative expression and representation
	• Plan and create their own drawings, paintings, models, and other art creations
	• Share experiences, ideas, and thoughts about artistic creations
	• Use a variety of art materials and activities for sensory experiences, exploration, creative expression, and representation
	• Express interest in and show respect for the creative work of others
	• Express experiences and feelings through a variety of artistic processes and creations
Movement	• Express through movement what is felt and heard in various patterns of beat and rhythm in music
	• Demonstrate an awareness of different musical tempos, patterns, and beats through movement
	• Gain awareness of different cultures through experiences with a variety of music and movement activities
	• Experience and use movement to reinforce learning in all curricular areas
Dramatic Play	• Participate in a variety of dramatic play activities
	• Show creativity and imagination in using materials and in assuming different roles in pretend play situations

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Emotional and Social Development	
Developmental Area	**Prior to entering kindergarten, parents and programs will provide learning experiences for children that allow them to:**
Self-Concept	• Develop and express a positive awareness of self in terms of specific abilities, characteristics, and preferences
	• Develop increasing independence in a range of activities, routines, and tasks
	• Demonstrate satisfaction when completing a task or solving a problem
	• Maintain individuality or a positive sense of self within a group
Self-Control	• Express feelings, needs, and opinions appropriately without harming themselves, others, or property
	• Begin to understand how their actions affect others and begin to accept the consequences of their actions
	• Follow simple rules and routines
	• Begin to use materials purposefully, safely, and respectfully
	• Attempt to solve a problem in a positive manner

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Emotional and Social Development (continued)	
Developmental Area	**Prior to entering kindergarten, parents and programs will provide learning experiences for children that allow them to:**
Cooperation	• Begin to use compromise, negotiation, and discussion in working, playing and resolving conflicts with peers
	• Begin to demonstrate the ability to give and take during peer interactions by helping, sharing, and discussing
	• Demonstrate the ability to take turns in games or using materials
	• Be a helpful member in a group or household through sharing tasks or chores
Social Relationships	• Accept guidance and directions from a range of familiar adults
	• Show ability to develop friendships with peers
	• Express empathy and care for others
	• Feel secure and comfortable communicating with familiar adults
	• Begin to demonstrate positive social skills, i.e., please, thank you, etc.
Knowledge of Families and Communities	• Begin to identify their own gender, family, and culture
	• Develop an understanding of similarities and respect for differences among people, such as gender, race, special needs, culture, language, and family structures
	• Develop awareness of community helpers
	• Show an awareness of home, classroom, school, and community
	• Demonstrate appropriate caution in unfamiliar and/or potentially dangerous situations

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Approaches to Learning	
Developmental Area	**Prior to entering kindergarten, parents and programs will provide learning experiences for children that allow them to:**
Initiative and Curiosity	• Participate in a variety of tasks and activities using all five senses
	• Make independent choices within the limits set by adults
	• Approach tasks and activities with flexibility, imagination, inventiveness, and confidence
	• Show eagerness and curiosity to learn about and discuss a variety of topics, ideas, and tasks
Engagement and Persistence	• Begin to develop the ability to focus and complete a variety of tasks, activities, projects, and experiences
	• Begin to develop a plan for play and follow through
	• Begin to develop the ability to concentrate despite distractions and interruptions
	• Begin to demonstrate the ability to follow a sequence of steps to create a finished project
Reasoning and Problem Solving	• Begin to develop the ability to recognize and solve problems through active exploration, including trial and error and interactions and discussions with peers and adults
	• Develop the ability to classify, compare and contrast objects, events, and experiences
	• Demonstrate the ability to sequence events

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Physical Health and Development	
Developmental Area	**Prior to entering kindergarten, parents and programs will provide learning experiences for children that allow them to:**
Fine Motor Skills	• Develop strength, dexterity and control needed to use tools and materials such as scissors, paper punch, stapler, hammer, play dough, and other manipulative materials
	• Develop hand-eye coordination in building with blocks, putting together puzzles, reproducing shapes and patterns, stringing beads, and using scissors
	• Show beginning control in the use of writing, drawing, and art tools including pencils, markers, chalk, paint brushes, and various types of technology
Gross Motor Skills	• Develop an awareness of their body, control and balance in walking, climbing, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, marching, galloping, riding a tricycle, and creative movement
	• Develop the ability to coordinate movements in throwing, catching, kicking, bouncing balls, and using the slide and swing
Health Status and Practices	• Progress in physical growth, strength, stamina, and flexibility
	• Participate actively in play, outdoor activities, and forms of exercise that enhance physical fitness
	• Begin to show growing awareness of nutrition and independence in hygiene, nutrition and personal care when eating, dressing, washing hands, brushing teeth and toileting
	• Build awareness and ability to follow basic health and safety rules such as fire safety, traffic and pedestrian safety; and responding appropriately to potentially harmful objects, substances, and activities

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Delaware Early Learning Foundations for School Success
Advisory Work Group

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Nancy Hawpe, **Co-Chair**	School Administration	Milford School District
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Kent County Focus Group		Sussex County Focus Group	
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Claudia Turner	Private Preschool	Clem Heyburn	Private Preschool
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